

Nurse and Spy

The Adventures of a Woman in Hospitals, Camps and Battlefields.

BY S. EMMA E. EDMONDS.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

The author, a native of New Brunswick, but inspired by love of the Union, at the outbreak of the civil war goes to Washington, engaged to the soldiers, leaving for the field of Bull Run with the army. During the battle she is the wounded.

CHAPTER VI.

A LOST FRIEND—A VOW—FROM NURSE TO SPY—WITHIN THE REBEL LINES AS A CONTRABAND.

Returning one day from an excursion, I found the camp almost deserted, and an unusual silence pervading all around. Upon looking to the right and left to discover the cause of so much quietness, I saw a procession of soldiers slowly winding their way from a peach orchard, where they had just deposited the remains of a comrade. Who could it have been? I did not dare to go and meet them to inquire, but I waited in vain. Suspense until the procession came up, with arms reversed. With sad faces and slow and measured tread they returned in order as they had gone. I stepped forward and inquired whom they had buried. "Lieut. James V—," was the reply.

My friend, they had buried him, and I had not seen him. I went to my tent without uttering a word. I felt as if it could not be possible that what I heard was true. I was glad that he did not die, but I did not inquire how, when, or where he had been killed, but there I sat with tearless eyes. Mr. and Mrs. B— came in, she sobbing aloud, he calm and dignified, but with tears slowly rolling down his face.

Lieut. V— was 22 years of age. He was tall, had black wavy hair and large, black eyes. He was a sincere Christian, active in all the duties devolving upon a Christian soldier, and was greatly respected by officers and men. His loss was deeply felt. His heart, though brave, was tender as a woman's. He was noble and generous, and had the sweetest regard for truth and law. Although gentle and kind to all, yet he had an indomitable spirit and a peculiar courage and daring, which almost amounted to recklessness in time of danger. He was not an American, but was born of English parents, and was a native of St. John, New Brunswick. I had known him almost from childhood, and found him always a faithful friend.

When we met in the army we met as strangers. The chances which life threw had wrought and changed him. I wore, together with change of name, rendered it impossible for him to recognize me. I was glad that he did not, and took peculiar pleasure in remaining unrecognized. We became acquainted again, and a new friendship sprang up, on his part, for mine was not new, which was very pleasant, at least to me.

At times my position became very embarrassing, for I was obliged to listen to a recapitulation of my own life, and relations and correspondence with him, which made me feel very much like an eavesdropper. He was glad that he did not, and took peculiar pleasure in remaining unrecognized. We became acquainted again, and a new friendship sprang up, on his part, for mine was not new, which was very pleasant, at least to me.

There was a strong bond of sympathy existing between us, for we both believed that duty called us there, and were willing to lay down even life itself, if need be, in this glorious cause. Now he was gone, and I was left alone with a broken heart in my heart that I had ever known before. Chapter B— broke the painful silence by informing me how he had been killed. He was acting in the capacity of Aid-de-Camp on Gen. C—'s staff. He was sent to carry an order from Headquarters to the officer in command of the outer picket-line, and while riding along the line he was struck by a minie-ball, which passed through the temple, killing him instantly.

THE GRAVE BY NIGHT.

His remains were brought to camp, and prepared for their last resting place. With out shroud or coffin, wrapped in his blanket, his body was committed to the cold ground.

Night came at last with its friendly mantle, and our camp was again hushed in comparative repose. Twelve o'clock came, but I could not sleep. Visions of a pale face and a mass of black wavy hair matted with gore, which oozed from a dark purple spot on the temple, haunted me. I rose up quickly and passed out into the open air. The cool night breeze felt grateful to my burning brow, which glowed with feverish excitement. With a hasty word of explanation I passed the camp guard, and was soon beside the grave of Lieut. V—. The solemn grandeur of the heavens, the stars looking lovingly down upon that little heap of mould of earth, the deathlike stillness of the hour, only broken by the occasional humming of a cricket, all combined to make the scene awfully impressive.

I felt that I was not alone. I was in the presence of that God who the first day of my friend to the eternal world, and the spirit of the departed one was hovering near, although my dim eyes could not penetrate the mysterious veil which hid him from my view. It was there, in that midnight hour, kneeling beside the grave of him who was very dear to me, that I vowed to avenge the death of that Christian hero.

I could now better understand the feelings of poor Neddy when he fired the pistol at me, because I was "one of the hated Yankees who was in sympathy with the murderers of her husband, father and brothers."

From this time forward I became strangely interested in the 15th chapter of first Corinthians, the doctrine of resurrection, and the hope that "redeemed of friends in heaven" became very precious to me.

FRIENDLY COUNSEL.

Just at this crisis I received a letter from a friend of mine at the North disapproving in strong terms of my remaining any longer in the army, requesting me to give up my situation immediately, and to meet him in Washington two weeks from date. I regarded that letter as coming very much, especially when they coincided with my own, but upon this point no two opinions could differ more widely than did ours.

It is true, I was becoming dissatisfied with my situation as nurse, and was determined to leave the hospital, but before doing so I thought it best to call a council of three, Mr. and Mrs. B— and I, to decide what was the best course to pursue. After an hour's conference together the matter was decided in my mind. Chapter B— told me that he knew of a situation he could get me. I had sufficient moral courage to undertake it, and said he, "It is a situation of great danger and of vast responsibility."

That morning a detachment of the 27th N. Y. had been sent out as scouts, and had returned, bringing in several prisoners, who stated that one of the Federal spies had been captured at Richmond and was to be executed. This information proved to be correct, and we lost a valuable soldier from the secret service of the United States.

Now, it was necessary for that vacancy to be supplied, and, as the Chaplain had said with reference to it, "It was a situation of great danger and vast responsibility, and this was the one which Mr. B— could procure for me. But was I prepared to fill it with honor to myself and advantage to the Federal Government? This was an important question for me to consider, and I proceeded further.

I did consider it thoroughly, and made up my mind to accept it with all its attendant responsibilities. The subject of life and death was not weighed in the balance. I left that in the hands of my Creator, feeling assured that I was just as safe in passing the picket-line of the enemy, if it was God's will that I should go there, as I would be in the Federal camp.

My name was sent in to Headquarters, and I was soon summoned to appear there.

kin do heaps of work. Will you hire me, Massa?"

"Don't know but I may. Can you cook?" "Yes, Massa, kin cook anything I ebber seen."

"How much do you think you can earn a month?"

"Guess I kin earn \$10 easy 'nuff."

"Turn to Mrs. B— soon he said in an undertone. "That darky understands his business."

Yes, indeed; I would hire him, by all means. Doctor told Mrs. B— he was a good fellow, and that he could do a great deal of work. "Well, if you wish, you can stay with me a month, and by that time I will be a better judge how much you can earn."

So saying, Dr. E— proceeded to give a synopsis of a contraband's duty toward a master of whom he expected \$10 per month, especially emphasizing the last clause. Then I was introduced to the culinary department, which comprised four, pork, beans, a small portable stove, a spider, and a medicine chest.

It was now supper time, and I was supposed to understand my business sufficiently to prepare supper without asking any questions whatever, and also to display some of my boasted talents by making warm biscuit for supper. But how was I to make biscuit with my colored hands, and how dare I wash them, for fear the color would wash off?

All this trouble was soon put to an end, however, by Jack's making his appearance while I was stirring up the biscuit with a stick, and in his bustling, officious, negro style he said, "See here, nigger, you don't know nuffin 'bout makin' biscuit. Jis let me show you once, and dat ar will save you heaps of trouble wid Massa Doct' for time to come."

I very willingly accepted of this proffered assistance, for I had all the necessary ingredients in the dish, with pork fat for shortening, and soda and cream-tartar, which I found in the medicine-chest, ready for kneading and rolling out. After washing his hands and rolling up his sleeves, Jack went to work with a flourish and a grin of satisfaction at being "boss" over the new cook. Tea made, biscuit baked, and the medicine-chest set off with tin cups, plates, etc., supper was announced. Dr. E— was much pleased with the general appearance of things, and evidently beginning to think that he had found rather an intelligent contraband for a cook.

A SECRET EXPEDITION.

After supper I was left to my own reflections, which were anything but pleasant at that time, for in the short space of three hours I must take up my line of march toward the camp of the enemy. As I sat there considering whether it was best for me to make myself known to Mrs. B— before I started, Dr. E— put his head in at the tent door and said in a hurried manner:

"No, I shall require them early in the morning."

"All right, Massa Doct' over night."

After washing up the few articles which had taken the place of dishes, and blacking the Doctor's boots, I went to seek an interview with Mrs. B—. I found her alone and told her who I was, but was obliged to give her satisfactory proofs of my identity before she was convinced that I was the identical nurse with whom she had parted three days previously.

My arrangements were soon made, and I was ready to start on my first secret expedition toward the Confederate Capital. Mrs. B— was pledged to secrecy with regard to her knowledge of "Neddy" and his mysterious disappearance. She was not permitted even to tell Mr. B— or Dr. E— and I believe she kept her pledge faithfully.

With a few hard crackers in my pocket, and my revolver loaded and capped, I started on foot, without even a blanket or anything which might create suspicion. At half-past 9 o'clock I passed through the outer picket-line of the Union army, at 12 o'clock I was within the rebel lines, and had not so much as been halted once by a sentinel. I had passed within less than 10 rods of a rebel picket, and he had not seen this white girl in a favorable omen, and thanked heaven for it.

As soon as I had gone a safe distance from the picket-line I lay down and rested until morning. The night was chilly and the ground cold and damp, and I passed the weary hours in fear and trembling. The first object which met my view in the morning was a party of negroes carrying out hot coffee and provisions to the rebel pickets.

This was another fortunate circumstance, for I immediately made their acquaintance, and was rewarded for my promptness by receiving a cup of coffee and a piece of corn bread, which helped very much to chase away the lingering chills of the preceding night. I remained there until the darkness returned, and then marched into Yorktown with them without eliciting the least suspicion.

The negroes went to work immediately on the fortifications, after reporting to their overseers, and I was left standing

"Take that black rascal and set him to work, and if he don't work well he him up and give him 20 lashes, just to impress upon his mind that there's no free niggers here while there's a Yankee left in Virginia."

ON A FORTIFICATION.

So saying he rode away, and I was conducted to a breastwork which was in course of erection, where about 100 negroes were at work. I was soon furnished with a pickaxe, shovel, and a monstrous wheelbarrow, and I commenced forthwith to imitate my companions in bondage. That portion of the parapet upon which I was sent to work was about eight feet high. The gravel was wheeled up in wheelbarrows on single planks, one end of which rested on the brow of the breastwork and the other on the ground.

I need not say that this work was ex-

The soldiers seemed to be as much in earnest as the officers, and could curse the Yankees with quite as much vehemence. Notwithstanding the hardships of the day, I had had my eyes and ears open, and had gained more than would counter-balance the day's work.

Night came, and I was released from toil. I was free to go where I pleased within the fortifications, and I made good use of my liberty. I made out a brief report of the mounted guns which I saw that night in my ramble round the camp: viz: 15 3-inch rifled cannon, 18 4½-inch rifled cannon, 29 22-pounders, 21 42-pounders, 22 8-inch Columbiads, 11 9-inch Dahlgrens, 12 16-inch Columbiads, 14 10-inch mortars, and seven 8-inch siege howitzers. This, together with a rough sketch of the outer works, I put under the inner sole of my contraband shoes and returned to the negro-quarters.

Finding my hands would not be in a condition to shovel much earth on the morrow, I began to look round among the negroes to find someone who would exchange places with me whose duty was of a less arduous character. I succeeded in finding a lad of about my own size who was engaged in carrying water to the troops.

He said he would take my place the next day, and he thought he could find a friend to do the same the day following, for which brotherly kindness I gave him \$5 in greenbacks, but he declared he could not take so much money. "He never had so much money in all his life before," he said. So I let him keep the scrutiny of the overseer, which would probably have resulted in the detection of my assumed African complexion.

(To be continued.)

EDITORIAL NOTE.—The author in the next installment tells how she found out the man who caused the death of her friend, Lieut. V—. Various incidents of the evacuation of Yorktown and the fighting that followed pursuit of the rebels are told in excellent style.

The New Monitors.

The naval program for 1898-'99, under the act of May 1, 1898, provides for three first-class battleships, four coast-defense monitors, 12 torpedo boats, and 10 torpedo destroyers. The four harbor defense monitors called for will present some of the most radical advances in the modern fighting armament.

The design for the monitors, which will be named Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, and Wyoming, was prepared by Chief Constructor H. C. Brown. It was decided that the best all-around arrangement that could be built with the available appropriation, was the arrangement with a single balanced turret on the center line forward, containing two high-powered 12-inch breech-loading rifles, a gun that has just been designed to be used with smokeless powder, four 4-inch rapid-fire breech-loading rifles, also to be used with smokeless powder, complete the battery. The secondary battery will consist of three 6-pounder rapid-fire and four 1-pounder automatic rifles.

The general characteristics of these vessels, as shown in the elements of design, will be: Length on load water line, 235 feet; breadth, extreme, at water line, 50 feet; mean draft, at normal displacement, 12 feet 6 inches; normal displacement, 2,700 tons; total coal capacity, loose stowage, 200 tons.

In the details of design will appear these characteristics:

The hull is to be of steel, not sheathed, with double bottom and close water-tight subdivisions. There will be one military mast, fitted with fighting and searchlight tops.

The protection of the hull against injury to the water-line region is to be afforded by means of a side-armor belt, the maximum thickness being 12 inches, tapering to five inches at the armor shelf, the depth being five feet. The maximum thickness is about the engine boiler spaces; thence forward and aft it is reduced by steps to a minimum thickness of five inches at the bow and stern. The barbet for the 12-inch guns will have armor about 10 inches thick.

The turret is of the 14-ton balanced type, with front plate inclined 42 degrees from the vertical. The side plates of the turret armor are to be 10 inches thick. The main or protective deck is to extend throughout the length of the vessel, to be worked flat. The top thickness will be one and a half inches.

A coming-turret of seven and a half inches in thickness, having an armored communication-tube three inches in thickness, will be carried in a suitable commanding position forward, the tube extending to the armor-deck, and affording protection to the voice-tubes, bell-wires, etc.

The vessel will be driven by twin-screws. The estimated speed of the vessel is to be 12 knots—sufficient for a harbor defense vessel. All wood used in the construction of the vessels will be fireproofed. The vessels will be fitted with docking keels, which will also serve the purpose of bilge-keels.

The vessels are to cost not more than \$1,500,000.

The Non-Commissioned Officers.

Editor National Tribune. I often wonder why it is that the non-commissioned officers and sketches of the late war we scarcely ever see a word about the non-commissioned officers, or of what part they played in that great, bloody struggle.

Are we become a Nation of man-war-ships? And is our worship confined to the great heroes, the great generals, the great Captains or Lieutenants? If he happened to serve on some General's staff?

Have we forgotten that a volunteer army includes more Sergeants than it does commissioned officers, and that without these Non-Coms the orders of the superior officers could not have been transmitted to, or obeyed by, the private, who did the real work of the war?

Now, it is not because I had the honor of being one of those unfortunate Sergeants, nor that I deserve any special credit for what I did and suffered during the war, that I write this letter, but because I happen to know some other comrades whose service was just as heroic and deserves as bright a page in our Nation's history as any General's.

I presume other comrades can recall instances where a Sergeant or a Corporal in charge of a squad of men on picket, or on a quiet post, baffled the approach of the enemy, many times receiving wounds, making them cripples for life, if not leaving their dead bodies as witnesses to the faithfulness of these Sergeants and Corporals, to say nothing of their pride and almost worshipful respect and attendance to the comforts and well being of their superior officers.

Now, will future writers please give us some word of praise for these hitherto-neglected "Non-Coms"?—Wm. Bottenberg, Quartermaster Sergeant, Co. G, 13th Ind. Cav., St. Paul, Minn.

Consistent Indulgence.

Washington Life.

"Wot's de use o' wakin' up dis way at 5 o'clock in the mornin'" inquired Phoggy Poo in indignantly.

"Well," answered Meandering Mike, "I take so much comfort out o' doin' nothin' dat I tought I'd like to get an early start."

Between the Acts.

Broadway Life.

She—"The program says it is 'taken from the German.'"

He—"Humph! I guess they were glad enough to get rid of it."

Fond of Arms.

Clara—I see Cynthia has decorated her room with guns, pistols, swords and the like.

Corah—Yes, she always has been a great girl for having arms around her.

Crowded Out.

Detroit Free Press.

"I asked her if she thought she could learn to love me."

"She said she couldn't—because she was already studying Spanish and learning to swim."

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